

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held on 18 July 2018 at 6.10 pm

Committee A: Mr P Anderson (arrived at 6:20pm), Ms H Kaur Takhtar, Ms S Perlmutter

Committee B: Rev. J Guest (Chair) and Rev. D Bates (arrived at 6:33pm)

Committee C: Ms J Culloty

Apologies: Mrs S Lawson, Mr A Kariyawasam, Ms M Shepherd, Dr O Soley and Councillors Martin Kerin, Sue MacPherson and Angela Lawrence

In attendance: Deborah Weston, Associate Advisor for Religious Education
Deborah Weston, Associate Advisor for Religious Education
Andrea Winstone, School Improvement Manager (arrived at 6:43pm)
Tisha Sutcliffe, Democratic Service Officer
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

The meeting started at 6:10pm allowing Lay Members extra time to arrive.

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, held on 30 January 2018 were approved as a correct record.

3. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

5. Monitoring Provision for Religious Education in Thurrock Schools

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education and the Chair voiced their concern with the lack of attendees at the Committee meeting, especially as all the Councillors sent their apologies.

The Chair stated that at least one person from each Committee would need to attend to ensure the meeting is quorate. As Councillors, they have a greater responsibility to attend the Committee meetings.

Mr P Anderson entered at 6:20pm

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education had organised a group exercise for all members to discuss this report and feedback.

Rev. D Bates entered at 6:33pm

Ms A Winstone entered at 6:43pm

Mr Anderson and Ms Winstone discussed Woodside and West Thurrock Academy and whether they followed the syllabus for Religious Education in School. They felt the syllabus was being followed by both schools.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education explained how important it was for Schools to be made aware of the changes to DfE regulations.

Ms Culloty and Ms Perlmutter discussed Gateway Academy and discovered that they were only allowing minimal hours per week for Religious Education and they had copied and pasted the syllabus on the website. They requested for this to be explored with the School. It was unclear as to whether Benyon Primary School was following the syllabus as there was no clear policy showing this.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education highlighted that Aveley Academy had been explored. However it was unclear whether Belmont Castle were following the syllabus within each year group as there was no clear indication of this.

Hathaway Academy had not put the latest schemes on the website and the most current scheme was in 2015. There was no clear record as to what the other year groups were being taught. The Associate Advisor for Religious Education stated that it needed to be clear on what syllabus the students not doing G.C.S.Es, in each year group, were being taught.

The Chair said he had a discussion with Ms J Bine at Arthur Bugler as they were unaware of the updated syllabus, however the school is very keen to follow the new syllabus.

There have been no concerns with St Clere's or Giffards Primary School following the updated syllabus.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education advised that William Edwards appeared to have a number of substitute teachers and no permanent staff members.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education explained that Ofsted said they would be completing a Risk Assessment in Schools in Thurrock and it would be positive if it came from SACRE members instead of Ofsted themselves.

There were concerns with the syllabus that Gateway Academy were following as it appeared years 7,8, and 10 were being integrated and year 11 were not studying any Religious Education.

Ms Winstone explained the number of recruitment issues that were occurring in Thurrock as the Borough appeared to be the lowest performance for teacher training. The Associate Advisor for Religious Education said there had never been an issue with Primary Schools in Thurrock.

Ms Winstone stated that staff members were working to improve this and to promote teaching jobs. She suggested recruitment fair to be organised as the issue was agency work being encouraged over taking up permanent positions.

It was observed by Ms Winstone that the Local Government felt there were more teachers in Thurrock than funds, however the children moving into Thurrock continues to increase. The Associate Advisor for Religious Education said the Ockendon Academy and Grays Convent were following the syllabus.

The discussion finished with Ms Culloty asking whether a letter could be distributed to the schools to ensure this improves.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Considered the report on provisions for Religious Education as recorded on School websites (Appendix A) alongside the School workforce report (Appendix B)**
- 2. Considered any follow up action that may have been warranted, where good practice was identified, where there was no evidence that the requirements of the agreed syllabus were met and where there looked to be limited or no provision.**
- 3. Considered writing to schools to inform them of the changes to DfE regulations and Ofsted practice (Appendix C)**

6. How Ofsted are reporting on Religious Education

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education organised a group exercise to discuss what Ofsted were looking at in Schools and to discover what was being offered in Religious Education.

Ms Kaur Takhtar said during the exercise she noticed that Ofsted commented on the Religious Education for year 6 students, however the feedback was negative due to the lack of time given to the students in Religious Education. Mr Anderson agreed there was inadequate time spent on Religious Education in Schools.

Ms Winstone said there appears to be a lack of prioritising amongst Governors as they were focused on the strategies and holding the school to account.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education emphasised that all staff members should be fully aware of the curriculum at the School they are working in.

Ms Winstone pointed out there will be a new curriculum in September 2019.

Ms Culloty and Ms Perlmutter shared their feedback on what they discovered during the exercise. Ms Culloty highlighted that the standards in Religious Education were extremely low and teachers were not being given the correct guidance on this subject. However since the previous inspection from Ofsted there has been an improvement.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Assessed the likely effectiveness of analysing comments on Religious Education in Ofsted reports for Thurrock Schools and their Governing Bodies.**
- 2. Discussed the key points found in the reports.**
- 3. Considered writing to all Schools and to their Governing Bodies to encourage them to use the materials as part of their meetings.**

7. Self-Evaluation Pilot of Religious Education in Thurrock Schools

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education advised that she would be completing a summary report for this item at the next meeting on 17 October 2018.

Mr Anderson said if SACRE were looking at supporting schools in making improvements the data would need to be shared on the local website as part of a survey. The results of the feedback should then be highlighted in green for positive and red for negative. Once all the information is gathered the figures should be shared with the Schools. The Associate Advisor for Religious Education felt this would be useful for Secondary Schools however not for Primary schools.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education advised that the School “work force” would be released in November 2018 and the G.C.S.E results will be published at a later date.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

1. Received responses from Schools to the self-evaluation pilot (Appendix A)
2. Discussed the key points found in the report.
3. Agreed to write to all Schools to report their findings from the pilot and encourage other to respond.

8. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business discussed

The meeting finished at 7.34 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**